

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending.

I. Paragraphs 1-2 - The Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite.

The Examiner's rejections are discussed below.

In claim 1, lines 4 and 7, it is not understood how a load lock mechanism can be capable of "carrying a process object into and out of the vacuum chamber".

Claim 1 has been amended to recite "holding and transferring."

In claim 2, last line, "from one of them to the other via the buffer" is unclear.

Claim 2, last paragraph has been amended for clarity.

In claim 5, line 7, it is not clear what is meant by "held by the ... load-lock mechanism".

Claim 1 has been amended for clarity and to provide antecedent basis for the term "held" in claim 5.

In claim 6 line 1, "inner" should apparently be --internal--.

The Examiner's suggestion has been made.

Claim 6, lines 4 and 6, the recitations that the arm "swings" appear to be method steps and are thus presumed to be mere functional recitations;

Claim 6 has been amended to recite "capable of swinging."

Claim 6, line 5, --one of-- should be inserted after "to"; and

Claim 6, line 7, --the other one of-- should be inserted after "from".

Claim 6 has been amended for clarity using repetitive language instead of the Examiner's proposed language. See also Applicants' specification, the paragraph bridging pages 4-5.

In claim 8 the various recitations of a "second load-lock mechanism" lack antecedent basis (the examiner assumes applicant intended the claim to include this element);

line 18, --one of-- should be inserted after "to" (second occurrence); and

line 20, --the other one of-- should be inserted after "from".

Claim 8 has been amended to delete the reference to the second load-lock mechanism.

line 12, it is not clear what is meant by "held by the ... load-lock mechanism";

Claim 8 has been amended to recite a first load-lock mechanism capable of holding and transferring a process object

line 13, it is not clear which "object" is referred to;

Claim 8 has been amended to recite "a process object" in place of "the process object."

lines 17 and 19, the recitations that the arm "swings" appear to be method steps.

Claim 8 has been amended to recite "capable of swinging."

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants' claims are clear and definite and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

II. The Rejection of Claim 8 Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claim 8, as best understood, is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by JP 10-125764, cited by applicant.

The Examiner states that JP '674 discloses a vacuum processing system comprising vacuum chamber 45, first and second load lock mechanisms 93, 95, holding mechanism 55 in the vacuum chamber for moving an object between a process position 131 or 133 (figs 5D-E) and a load position 57, and an internal arm "capable of", as broadly claimed, exchanging an object at the load position with another object, wherein the internal arm includes first and second arms 49, 51 which are at least "capable of operating in the manner set forth to move objects between the load position and the first and second load locks.

The Examiner's statement "as best understood" appears to be a reference to the lack of antecedent basis for the second load lock mechanism.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is not anticipated by or obvious over the disclosures of JP 10-125764 and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection in view of the following remarks.

In claim 8, the **first arm** (7) is capable of swinging in a first swing direction to move a process object at the load position (10A) to the **first** load-lock mechanism (1), and at the same time the **second arm** (8) is capable of swinging in a second swing direction reverse to the first swing direction to move another process object from the first load-lock mechanism (1) to the load position (10A). JP 10-125764, the **first arm** (49) is capable of transferring the process object from the load position (57) to the **first** load-lock mechanism (93) or from the **first** load-lock mechanism (93) to the load position (57), and the **second arm** (51) is capable of transferring the process object from

the load position (57) to the **second** load-lock mechanism (95) or from the **second** load-lock mechanism (95) to the load position (57). In JP 10-125764 the **second arm** (51) is not capable of transferring the process object from the load position (57) to the **first** load-lock mechanism (93) or from the **first** load-lock mechanism (93) to the load position (57).

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claim 8 is neither taught by nor made obvious from the disclosures of JP 10-125764 and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

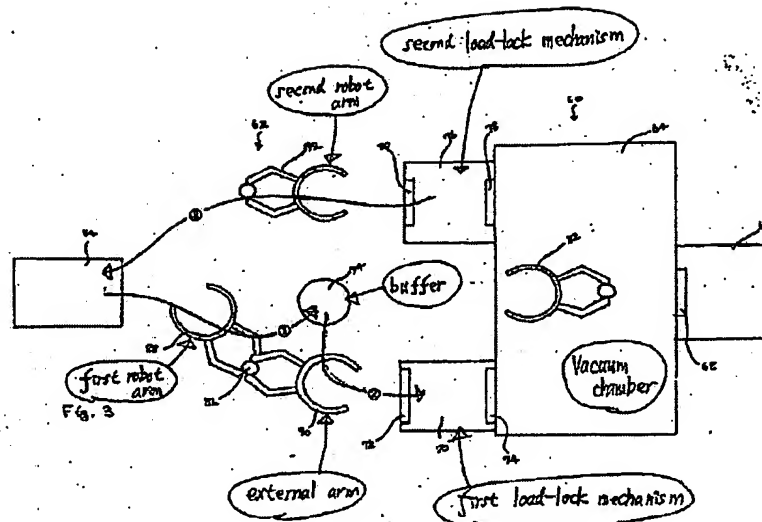
III. The Rejections of Claims 1-7 Based on Dickinson

Claims 1-4 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Dickinson (US 6,852,644).

Claims 5-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Dickinson in view of JP 10-125764.

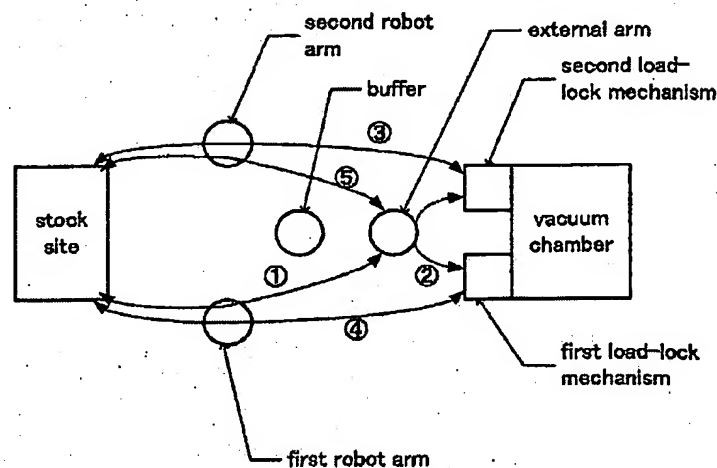
Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is not anticipated by or obvious over the disclosures of Dickinson, alone or in view of JP 10-125764, and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection in view of the following remarks.

Dickinson's invention can be interpreted as follows.



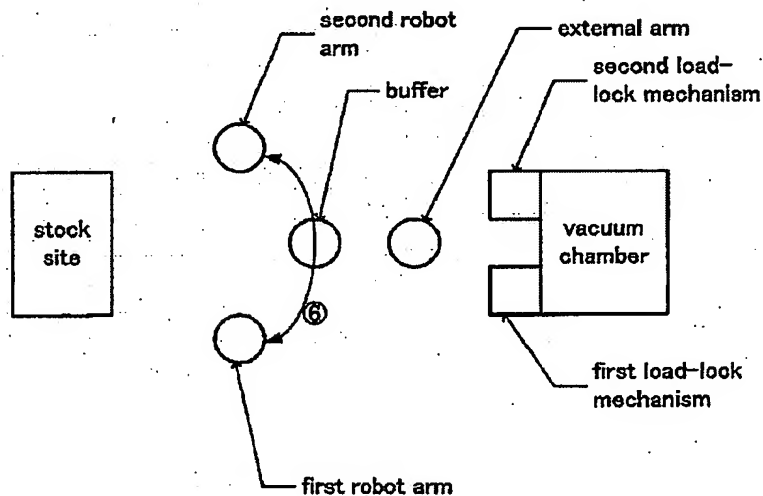
The arrows 1, 2 and 3 represent the transfer route of the process object (please see column 10, lines 1-19).

The transfer route of the process object as defined in claim 1 is shown in the following figure.



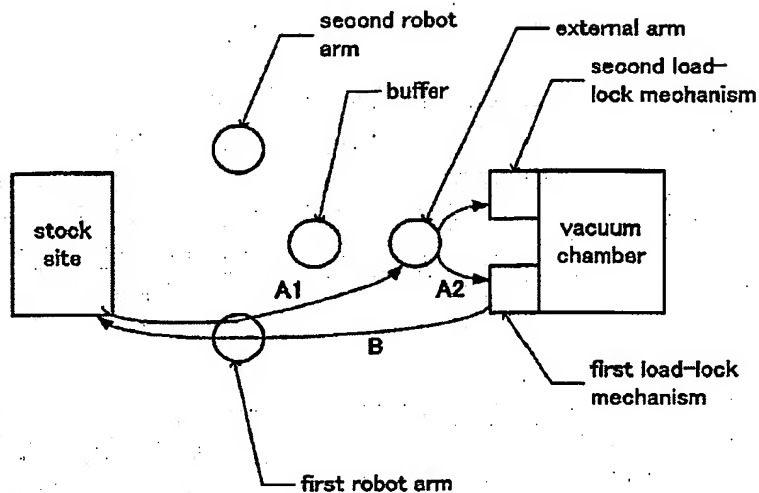
The routes 1, 2 and 3 are taught by Dickinson. However, Dickinson does not teach other routes 4 and 5. Therefore, Dickinson does not anticipate or render obvious claim 1. Further, claims 2-4 and 7, which depend from claim 1, are also not anticipated or rendered obvious from the teachings of Dickinson for the same reasons.

Further to claim 2, the following route 6 is defined.



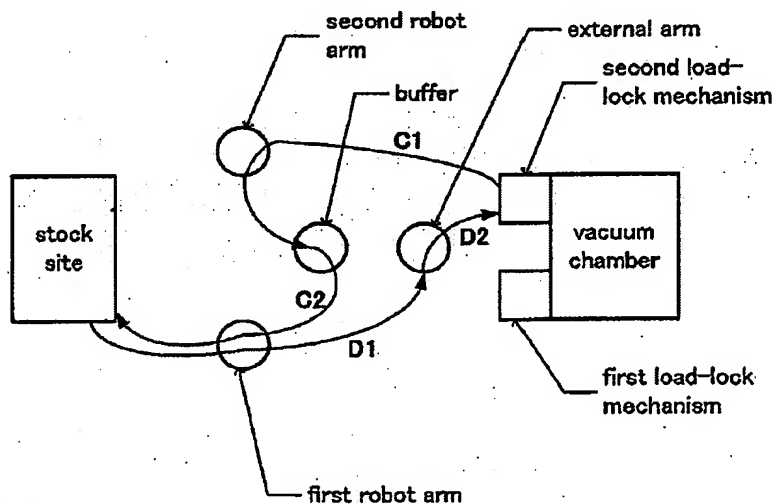
Dickinson does not teach route 6.

In claim 3, the following routes A1, A2 and B are defined.



Dickinson teaches the routes A1 and A2, but does not teach the route B.

In claim 4, the following routes C1, C2, D1 and D2 are defined.



Dickinson does not teach the routes C1, C2 and D2.

Further to the Examiner's rejection of claims 5 and 6, JP 10-125764 does not overcome the deficiencies in the teachings of Dickinson. Additionally, as to the teachings of JP 10-125764, claim 6 includes similar features as discussed above in Section II in connection with claim 8.

Thus, JP 10-125764 does not teach the claimed elements of claim 6. Therefore claim 6 is not taught or rendered obvious by the teachings of Dickinson in view of JP 10-125764.

IV. Conclusion

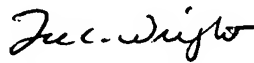
In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, Applicants submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants request such action at an early date.

If the Examiner believes that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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